

# DGuzik 64 3John

David Guzik

Book 64 of Bible Commentary:  
David Guzik



calibre 1.20.0

(3Jn 1:1)

## ***Introduction and Thanksgiving***

From<sup>1</sup> the elder,<sup>2</sup> to Gaius<sup>3</sup> my dear brother, whom I love in truth.<sup>4</sup>

(Guzik)

### **3Jn 1:1-14**

#### **3 JOHN - FOLLOWING GOOD EXAMPLES**

“But it has been the lot both of the *minor prophets* and the *minor epistles* to be generally neglected; for with many readers *bulk* is every thing; and, no *magnitude*, no goodness.” (Adam Clarke, on the shorter books of the Bible)

A. Greeting and introduction.

1. (3Jn\_1:1) The writer and the reader.

THE ELDER, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

a. **The Elder:** The writer of this book identifies himself simply as **the Elder**. Presumably, the first readers knew who this was, and from the earliest times, Christians have understood that this was the Apostle John writing, the same John who wrote the Gospel of John , 1 and 2 John, and the Book of Revelation.

i. Perhaps he does not directly refer to himself for the same reason he does not directly refer to his readers in 2

John - the threat of persecution may be making direct reference unwise; and of course, unnecessary.

b. **To the beloved Gaius:** We don't know if this specific **Gaius** is connected with the other men by this name mentioned in the New Testament (Act\_19:19; Act\_20:4; 1Co\_1:14; Rom\_16:23).

i. The identification is difficult because **Gaius** was a very common name in the Roman Empire.

2. (3Jn\_1:2-4) A blessing for faithful **Gaius**.

Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth *that is* in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

a. **Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things:**

The word for **prosper** literally means “to have a good journey.” It metaphorically means to succeed or prosper. It is like saying, “I hope things go well for you.”

i. “Both verbs [for **prosper** and **be in health**] belonged to the everyday language of letter writing” (Stott). This phrase as so common that sometimes it was condensed into only initials, and everyone knew what the writer meant just from the initials.

ii. The abbreviation used in Latin was SVBEEV, meaning *Si vales, bene est; ego valeo* - “If you are well, it is good; I am well.”

b. **I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers:** John used this common phrase in his sending of best wishes and blessings to **Gaius**. Some have wrongly taken this as a guarantee of perpetual wealth and perfect health for the Christian.

i. Of course, we should *always* remember that God wants our best and plans only good for us. Often present material prosperity and physical health are part of that good He has for us - and this prosperity and health are absolutely promised as the *ultimate* destiny of all believers.

ii. Yet, for the present time, God may - according to His all-wise plan - use a lack of material prosperity and physical health to promote greater prosperity and health in the scale of eternity.

iii. Nevertheless, *some* live in poverty and disease simply because they do not seek God’s best, follow God’s principles, and walk in faith. As well, there are *some others* who say we should use God’s general promises of blessing

as a way to indulge a carnal desire for ease, comfort, and luxury.

c. **Just as your soul prospers:** John here made an analogy between the condition of our health and the condition of our soul. Many Christians would be desperately ill if their physical health was instantly in the same state as their spiritual health.

d. **I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth:** John's goodwill towards **Gaius** came from his understanding that he walked in the truth. Nothing pleased John more than to know that his **children walk in truth**.

i. John knew that Gaius walked in truth because **brethren came and testified of the truth that** was in Gaius.

His walk of truth was noticed by others, and they could talk about it because they saw it.

e. **That my children walk in truth:** This means more than living with correct doctrine. "What is it to 'walk in truth'? It is not walking in *the* truth, or else some would suppose it meant that John was overjoyed because they were sound in doctrine, and cared little for anything else. His joyous survey did include their orthodoxy in creed, but it reached far beyond." (Spurgeon)

i. To **walk in truth** means to walk consistent with the truth you believe. If you believe that you are fallen, then walk wary of your fallenness. If you believe you are a child of God, then walk like a child of heaven. If you believe you are forgiven, then walk like a forgiven person.

ii. To **walk in truth** means to walk in a way that is real and genuine, without any phoniness or concealment.

B. Learning from good and bad examples.

1. (3Jn\_1:5-8) Gaius: A good example.

Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the church. *If* you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the

Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.

a. **You do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers:** John praised Gaius for his hospitality.

This may seem somewhat trivial to us, but it is not to God. This is a practical outworking of the essential command to love one another; it is love in action.

i. This was a great compliment: **you do faithfully whatever you do**. Whatever God gives us to do, we should do it **faithfully**. Jesus said that when we see Him face to face some will hear the words, *well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.* (Mat\_25:21) Of the good servant, it is said he was *faithful*.

b. **Send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God:** In that day, Christian travelers in general and itinerant ministers in particular were greatly dependent upon the hospitality of other Christians. John knew that when Christians assist those who contend for the truth, they become **fellow workers for the truth**.

i. The reward for these support people is the same as those who are out on the front lines. 1Sa\_30:21-25 shows this principle, where the spoils are distributed equally among those who fought and those who supported. King David understood that the supply lines were just as vital as the soldiers, and God would reward both soldiers and supporters properly and generously.

ii. Jesus promised that even the help offered in a cup of cold water to one of His children would not be forgotten when God brings His reward (Mat\_10:42).

iii. This also explains why John would pray for the prosperity of Gaius: he used his resources in a godly way, being a blessing to others. If God blessed him with more, others would be blessed more also.

c. **Taking nothing from the Gentiles:** The ancient world of the early church was filled with the missionaries and

preachers of various religions, and they often supported themselves by taking offerings from the general public. But John said that these Christian missionaries should take **nothing from the Gentiles** (non-Christians). Instead of soliciting funds from the general public they were to look to the support of fellow Christians.

d. **In a manner worthy of God:** Christians are not only called to help, but to help **in a manner worthy of God**. We are to do our best to help others excellently.

i. Christians must first see that they are doing something to help the spread of the gospel. Then they must see that they do it **in a manner worthy of God**. God calls every one of us to have a part in the great commission, the command of Mat\_28:19 : *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. One can have a part by going or have a part by helping, but everyone has a part and should do it well.

ii. Jesus said, *He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.* (Mat\_10:40-41) This should make us consider how we receive and help those who are preach the gospel.

2. (3Jn\_1:9-11) **Diotrephes**: A bad example.

I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting *them* out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.

a. **But Diotrephes**: John publicly rebuked a man named **Diotrephes**, and he rebuked him by name. In rebuking an

individual by name, the apostle of love did not act outside of love. Instead, he followed the clear command of the Scriptures (Rom\_16:17) and the example of other apostles (2Ti\_4:14-15).

i. However, any such public rebuke must be made only when necessary, and we must be careful to not judge a brother against any standard that we ourselves would not be judged (Mat\_7:1-2).

iii. By presenting himself as a “prominent Christian leader” (at least in his own mind), **Diotrephes** knew that he was open to public criticism - just as much as he would publicly criticize the apostle John and his associates (**prating against us with malicious words**).

b. **Who loves to have the preeminence among them:** Simply, the problem for **Diotrephes** was *pride*. In his pride, he did not **receive** the apostles such as John. This was in contrast to the humble hospitality of Gaius, who walked in the truth.

i. We can imagine a man like Diotrephes, a leader in the church in some city, looking at John and saying to himself, “Why should these big shot apostles get all the attention and honor? Look at my ministry! Isn’t it just as good?”

And pride would lead him, like many others, to destruction.

ii. Boice on **who loves to have the preeminence among them**: “This is the original and greatest of all sins. It is the sin of Satan, who was unwilling to be what God had created him to be and who desired rather to be ‘like the Most High’ (Isa\_14:14). It is the opposite of the nature of Christ ‘who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant’.”

c. **Prating against us with malicious words**: Diotrephes not only failed to receive John and the other apostles, but he also spoke against them. His malicious gossip against the apostles showed what kind of man he really was.

i. “The Greek verb which is here translated ‘gossiping’ comes from a root which was used of the action of water in boiling up and throwing off bubbles. Since bubbles are empty and useless, the verb eventually came to mean indulgence in empty or useless talk. This was the nature of Diotrephes’ slander, though, of course, the words were no less evil in that they were groundless.” (Boice)

ii. “The word signifieth . . . to talk big bubbles of words . . . it is a metaphor taken from over-seething pots, that send forth a foam; or . . . from overcharged stomachs, that must needs belch.” (Trapp)

d. **Putting them out of the church:** Diotrephes not only used his influence to forbid others from showing hospitality to John or his associates; he even tried to excommunicate those who tried to show such hospitality.

i. “To begin with, a man named Diotrephes had assumed an unwarranted and pernicious authority in the church, so much so that by the time of the writing of this letter John’s own authority had been challenged and those who had been sympathetic to John had been excommunicated from the local assembly. Moreover, due to this struggle, traveling missionaries had been rudely treated, including probably an official delegation from John.” (Boice)

ii. The example of Diotrephes shows that those who love **to have the preeminence** also love to use whatever power they think they have as a sword against others.

e. **Do not imitate what is evil, but what is good:** John gave us two clear examples, one good (Gaius) and one bad (Diotrephes), and he now applies the point - follow the good, for we serve a good God and those who follow Him will likewise do good.

i. John did not excommunicate Diotrephes, though as an apostle he had the authority to do so. Instead, he simply exposed him - and he trusted that discerning Christians would avoid Diotrephes as they should.

3. (3Jn\_1:12) **Demetrius:** A good example.



Demetrius has a *good* testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.

a. **Demetrius has a good testimony from all:** John recommended this man to Gaius. Perhaps he was the one who carried the letter from John to Gaius, and John wanted Gaius to know that he was worthy of Christian hospitality.

b. **Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself:** Demetrius was so faithful to the truth that even the truth was a witness on his behalf.

C. Conclusion.

1. (3Jn\_1:13-14 a) John explains such a short letter to Gaius. I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face.

a. **I had many things to write:** We can sympathize with John's preference for personal, face to face communication rather than the writing of letters. Yet we are thankful that John was forced to write, so that we have the record of this letter of 3 John.

2. (3Jn\_1:14 b) Final blessings.

Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

a. **Our friends greet you:** In addition to a familiar blessing of **peace** upon Gaius, John also reminded him (and us) of the common ties of Christians - even if they are separated by miles, they are still **friends** in Jesus, and appropriately they should greet one another.

b. **Peace to you:** This is a letter about contention and conflict; yet John appropriately ends the letter with a desire and expectation for **peace**. As Christians, we can and should have a sense of peace even in the midst of difficult times.

Christians have the resources in Jesus Christ to have peace even in unsettled seasons.

(3Jn 1:2) Dear friend, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with

your soul.<sup>5</sup>

(3Jn 1:3) For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, just as you are living according to the truth.<sup>6</sup>

(3Jn 1:4) I have no greater joy than this: to hear<sup>7</sup> that my children are living according to the truth.<sup>8</sup>

(3Jn 1:5) ***The Charge to Gaius***

Dear friend,<sup>9</sup> you demonstrate faithfulness<sup>10</sup> by whatever you do for the brothers (even though they are strangers).

(3Jn 1:6) They<sup>11</sup> have testified to your love before the church.<sup>12</sup> You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.<sup>13</sup>

(3Jn 1:7) For they have gone forth<sup>14</sup> on behalf of "The Name,"<sup>15</sup> accepting nothing from the pagans.<sup>16</sup>

(3Jn 1:8) Therefore we<sup>17</sup> ought to support such people, so that we become coworkers in cooperation with the truth.<sup>18</sup>

(3Jn 1:9) ***Diotrephes the Troublemaker***

I wrote something to the church,<sup>19</sup> but Diotrephes,<sup>20</sup> who loves to be first among them, does not acknowledge us.<sup>21</sup>

(3Jn 1:10) Therefore, if I come,<sup>22</sup> I will call attention to the deeds he is doing<sup>23</sup> — the bringing of unjustified charges against us with evil words! And not being content with that, he not only refuses to welcome the brothers himself, but hinders the people who want to do so and throws them out of the church!

(3Jn 1:11) Dear friend, do not imitate what is bad but what is good.<sup>24</sup> The one who does good is of God; the one who does what is bad has not seen God.<sup>25</sup>

(3Jn 1:12) ***Worthy Demetrius***

Demetrius<sup>26</sup> has been testified to by all, even by the truth itself. We also testify to him,<sup>27</sup> and you know that our testimony is true.

(3Jn 1:13) ***Conclusion***

I have many things to write to you, but I do not wish to write to you with<sup>28</sup> pen and ink.<sup>29</sup>

(3Jn 1:14) But I hope to see you right away, and we will speak face to face.<sup>30</sup>

(1:15) Peace be with you.<sup>31</sup> The friends here<sup>32</sup> greet you. Greet the friends<sup>33</sup> there<sup>34</sup> by name.